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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents the youth development approach to supporting adolescents in dealing with all the issues they face, including preventing unintended pregnancies. The Department of Health and Human Services promotes five principles that research and experience suggest are key to community efforts to prevent teen pregnancy: (1) parental and adult involvement; (2) abstinence; (3) clear strategies for the future; (4) community involvement; and (5) sustained commitment. Chapter 1 provides an overview of adolescent pregnancy prevention. Chapter 2, "The Abstinence versus Education Debate," discusses the sexuality education paradigm that underpins many existing adolescent pregnancy prevention programs. Chapter 3, "Pregnancy Prevention from the Youth Development Perspective," describes the Family and Youth Services Bureau's youth development approach to pregnancy prevention as implemented by the Bureau's Transitional Living Program grantees; chapter 4, "Ideas for Getting Started," offers suggestions that communities can use to start creating a more comprehensive framework for supporting youth and preventing adolescent pregnancy. Chapter 5, "Building on Lessons Learned," offers some concluding remarks. The booklet includes a 26-item bibliography and a list of resource organizations. (Contains 20 references.) (SLD)

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Family and Youth Services Bureau

Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy:

A Youth Development Approach

ED 424 320

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Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy:

A Youth Development Approach

Prepared by the
National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth
for the
Family and Youth Services Bureau

February 1998

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Foreword

Adolescent pregnancy prevention is near the top of the national agenda today. Resolving the problem of adolescent pregnancy is popularly seen as one of the keys to addressing a range of issues, from welfare dependency to poor health outcomes for children.

Efforts to prevent adolescent pregnancy most often have focused on providing the right combination of rewards and punishments so that youth will make responsible choices. Yet, young people's perceptions of their choices are powerfully affected by how they view the future. Youth who see a bleak future limited by poverty, little contact with relatives, or lack of educational or vocational opportunities may consider parenthood one of the few opportunities they have for self-expression, creativity, and a family. Young people who have been abused or neglected may see sexual activity as an opportunity to feel loved or appreciated or as a way of asserting control in an area in which they previously were coerced. Without support, these youth are not in a position to make the right choices.

Further, while we ask youth to make responsible choices about their sexual behavior, they often receive mixed messages about sexuality from society. The advertising and entertainment industries, media outlets, and some popular role models promote a climate of permissiveness in which sex becomes a commodity or a measure of a person's value. At the same time, adults and adult institutions, while able to address the mechanics of sexual behavior, seem unsure of how to consistently communicate to young people, from an early age, clear messages about what constitutes healthy sexual development and healthy sexual expression. Is it any wonder that young people are confused and vulnerable to

pressures to become sexually active before they have thought through the implications of that choice?

When these factors are considered, debates about the effectiveness of specific approaches to pregnancy prevention become less important. In fact, the focus of pregnancy prevention efforts far too often has been young people rather than communities. Given the realities facing many young people, the challenge is to develop comprehensive strategies that involve entire communities in removing institutional roadblocks and making the systemic changes required to enable young people to make healthy choices regarding sexual activity. Creating such strategies requires focusing on adolescent sexual development in the context of young people's overall development into healthy adults who contribute to their communities.

This is exactly the approach the Family and Youth Services Bureau and its local grantee youth agencies have promoted for more than two decades. This book presents the youth development approach to supporting adolescents in dealing with all the issues they face, including preventing unintended pregnancies. More important, the youth development approach ensures that all young people have access to opportunities that give them hope for the future, which is, without question, the best form of adolescent pregnancy prevention.

Terry R. Lewis
Associate Commissioner
Family and Youth Services Bureau

About the Family and Youth Services Bureau

The mission of the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) is to provide national leadership on youth issues and to assist individuals and organizations in providing effective, comprehensive services for youth in at-risk situations and their families. The goals of FYSB programs are to provide positive alternatives for youth, ensure their safety, and maximize their potential to take advantage of available opportunities.

FYSB, a Bureau within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families; Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, encourages communities to support young people through a youth development approach. The youth development approach suggests that helping all young people achieve their full potential is the best way to prevent them from becoming involved in risky behavior. Youth development strategies focus on giving young people the chance to build skills, exercise leadership, form relationships with caring adults, and help their communities. Further, the youth development approach acknowledges both that youth are resources in rebuilding communities and that helping young people requires strengthening families and communities.

FYSB administers three grant programs that support locally based services to runaway and homeless youth. The Basic Center Program funds local agencies to provide emergency shelter, food, clothing, outreach services, and crisis intervention for runaway and homeless youth. The shelters also offer services to help reunite youth with their families, whenever possible. The

Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth (TLP) assists homeless youth in developing skills and resources to promote independence and prevent future dependency on social services. Housing, services, and counseling are provided for up to 18 months for youth ages 16–21 who are unable to return to their homes. The Street Outreach Program enables FYSB to fund local youth service providers to conduct street-based outreach and offer emergency shelter and services to young people who have been or who are at risk of being sexually abused or exploited, with the goal of helping them to leave the streets.

FYSB also funds research and demonstration projects to advance our knowledge of runaway and homeless youth issues; provides information though its National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth; supports the National Runaway Switchboard, a confidential, 24-hour, toll-free hotline for runaway youth; and funds training and technical assistance through a regional system of providers.

Introduction

In 1997, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) responded to a call from President Clinton and the United States Congress to develop a national strategy to prevent out-of-wedlock adolescent pregnancies and to ensure, under the new welfare law, that at least 25 percent of communities have adolescent pregnancy prevention programs in place.

The DHHS responded with a national strategy that is designed to accomplish the following two goals:

- Strengthen the national response to preventing out-of-wedlock adolescent pregnancies
- Support and encourage adolescents to remain abstinent

Specifically, the DHHS will promote the following five principles that research and experience suggest are key to promising community efforts to prevent teen pregnancy:

- **Parental and Adult Involvement:** Parents and other adult mentors must play key roles in encouraging young people to avoid early pregnancy and to stay in school.
- **Abstinence:** Abstinence and personal responsibility must be primary messages of prevention programs.
- **Clear Strategies for the Future:** Young people must be given clear connections and pathways to college or jobs that give them hope and a reason to stay in school and avoid pregnancy.

- **Community Involvement:** Public- and private-sector partners throughout communities, including parents, schools, businesses, the media, health and human service providers, and religious organizations, must work together to develop comprehensive strategies.

- **Sustained Commitment:** Real success requires a sustained commitment to the young person over a long period of time. (January 6, 1997, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Press Release)

Each of these factors is critical, not individually, but in concert. Encouraging young people to be abstinent and to take responsibility for their actions, for example, is a positive goal. Yet, without the sustained commitment of adults and the broader community to teaching those young people how to make responsible decisions and to providing them with opportunities to build a future, that positive goal likely will not be achieved. Real pregnancy prevention efforts require more than the provision of sex education courses or access to family planning services. They require a comprehensive community-based approach that focuses on providing young people with all the age-appropriate developmental services and opportunities necessary to make the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) and its grantees are committed to building that comprehensive approach in communities across the country. Through this booklet, FYSB and its local youth service agencies present their strategies for supporting young people as they move toward adulthood.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of adolescent pregnancy prevention in changing times. Chapter 2

discusses the sexuality education paradigm that underpins many existing adolescent pregnancy prevention efforts to date. Chapter 3 describes the FYSB youth development approach to pregnancy prevention as implemented by the Bureau's Transitional Living Program grantees, and Chapter 4 offers some suggestions that communities can use to get started in creating a more comprehensive framework for supporting youth and preventing adolescent pregnancy. Chapter 5 offers some concluding remarks.

Chapter 1
Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention in a Time of Change

Today, the Nation is wrestling with the issue of adolescent pregnancy prevention during a time of general disillusionment with entitlement programs, the "welfare state," and the overall social service paradigm. Welfare reform, and the new construct of welfare to work, in particular, has created a need to examine the role of communities in supporting the disadvantaged.

The ongoing dialogue around welfare reform more often than not has focused on the perception that some women have babies *in order to* obtain welfare benefits. There is little real evidence to support this analysis. Women who become pregnant unintentionally and at an early age typically do end up in the welfare system. But a causal relationship between planning pregnancies and benefit program structures has never been demonstrated.

A case can be made, however, that young women who have babies when they are between ages 15 and 17 often go on to have another child within the next 18 to 24 months. Common sense tells us that adolescents who have babies are less likely to finish school, making it difficult to locate employment. Once on the trajectory of motherhood, these young women find it more challenging to make progress in other areas unless they have strong support. The career pathway for these young women becomes continuing motherhood, often at taxpayers' expense. For young males, the impact of fathering a child is less clear since adolescent mothers

are much more likely to be the sole caretakers of their children than are adolescent males.

Without question, adolescent parenthood has effects on society that are similar to those of intergenerational poverty. Young parents often are ill equipped to support their children's overall physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development, resulting in the ongoing cycle of missed opportunities, poverty, and dependence on social services.

Currently, the country is examining who is on the welfare roles and determining how to help those individuals make the transition into real and lasting employment. Many of those individuals will be women who became pregnant with their first children during adolescence or early adulthood and who are at risk of failing to make the transition to meaningful employment and self-sufficiency if they unintentionally become pregnant again.

At the same time, however, this country is experiencing an increasing climate of acceptability of and permissiveness toward people's behavior, which has been reinforced by messages from the entertainment industry and the general breakdown in community relationships and institutions. When the loosening of societal boundaries results in circumstances that create burdens on the larger community, which is many people's perception of the link between out-of-wedlock births and the welfare state, there is an inevitable and understandable backlash.

Moreover, today, with contraceptives readily available and effective, there also is less sympathy for unplanned pregnancies. In the past, people believed that "accidents could happen." Today, they are less forgiving. Yet,

the reasons adolescent girls become pregnant generally are both complex (poverty, social gender conditioning, sexual abuse, rape) and simple (the human drive for physical intimacy).

The result is a gentle tension tugging at the subconscious of Americans. Most believe in supporting their neighbors, reaching out to help the less fortunate, and caring for children and youth. Yet, they also are increasingly frustrated by social problems that appear to be worsening despite decades of investment of their tax dollars in social programming.

That investment, however, has begun to yield benefits. The lessons learned through the social programs of yesteryear now are driving a revolution. In today's social service arena, the buzzwords are community involvement, systemic change, and accountability. While not easy to achieve, these standards are forcing many communities to rethink how they manage the business of helping.

There is increasing awareness, for example, that dealing with public health issues, including adolescent pregnancy and substance abuse, requires a comprehensive approach that begins at the community level. The California Wellness Foundation, for example, recently launched a 10-year, $6 million initiative to prevent teen pregnancy. It began by providing seed money to community-based organizations to build community consensus around how to most effectively address this problem. This initiative reflects the awareness that, while it is important to address the information needs of young people regarding healthy sexual development, more lasting social change will occur only when communities begin to identify the full range of issues placing young people at risk of unintended pregnancies.

These issues include shifting societal value structures, lack of support systems for abused and neglected children and youth, and young people who receive more messages from television than from their parents and communities. To address these needs, communities need to expand their understanding of adolescent development.

Understanding Adolescence

Much has been written about the defining stages, or moments, of early childhood. Whether from a book or family folklore, most new parents know at what age to expect their children to begin talking or walking. Less, however, is commonly known or discussed about adolescence, which is portrayed as the "difficult" life stage. Understanding why young people behave the way they do would begin to provide us with ideas on how to effectively work with and support young people through this life stage.

Adolescence is a time for young people to define their place in the family, their peer groups, and the larger community. During this stage of their lives, youth struggle with the transition from childhood to adulthood. During childhood, they depended mainly on their parents for economic and emotional support and direction. In adulthood, though, they will be expected to achieve independence and make choices about school, work, and personal relationships that will affect every aspect of their futures.

During this period, young people must contend with physical changes, pressure to conform to current social trends and peer behaviors, and increased expectations from family members, teachers, and other adults. Adolescents also must deal with sometimes conflicting messages from parents, peers, or the media. They struggle with an increasing need to feel as if they "belong."

During adolescence, young people begin to take risks and experiment. They do so because they are moving from a family-centered world to the larger community within which they will begin to define their own identities. They may choose friends of whom their parents do not approve or try alcohol or other drugs. They may wear clothing that is trendy and generational, begin comparing their families' lifestyles with those of other families, or break rules imposed by their parents or the larger community.

Adolescence also is a time of great cognitive and physical change. During this life stage, young people develop the ability to think about more than facts. They begin formulating possibilities and making connections between thoughts. Concurrent with this cognitive development are increasingly pronounced physical changes, including sexual maturation.

Sexual maturation is as inevitable a part of the life span as growing old. While young people have some capacity to make choices about whether or not to smoke or take drugs, they have little control over their physiological sexual development. Moreover, while society may be interested in preventing young people from ever becoming involved with drugs or violence, sexual activity is something to be guided or delayed until adulthood or marriage, not stopped entirely.

Today, adolescents are maturing at an earlier age than did previous generations. This increases the likelihood that they will not have been exposed to sexual education before they experience changes caused by their own sexual development. It also increases the period of sexual exploration between puberty and marriage. Moreover, youth ages 10–12 may be physically mature, but their still-limited cognitive reasoning abilities make providing information about, or discussing, sexuality issues all the more challenging. Moreover, their emotional or social development may not be keeping pace with their new physical maturity.

By the time most youth reach the age of 13 or 14, they have some sense of their body image and have developed a general sense of their self-worth, for better or for worse. At that age, most of that sense of self is related to how their parents, teachers, other significant adults, and peers have treated them. Clearly, young people do not grow up in isolation. They do so in families, schools, and communities. The culture of each affects young people's self-perception, their decision-making, their behavior, and their view of the future.

Youth also are socialized regarding their sexual development through a range of cultural images and messages from their parents, their religious advisors, the media, and their peers. Yet, this socialization is more random than that which occurs in most other areas. Consider the example of teaching young people to brush their teeth, a dissimilar activity but relevant in terms of the discipline necessary to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Parents teach their children about brushing their teeth at a relatively early age and then spend considerable time coaching youngsters to develop the habit of brushing at least twice a day.

In the area of sexuality, almost the reverse happens. The cultural norms around sexuality tend to limit open discussion. Even in close families, parents often do not display physical affection and most do not talk with their children about relationships or intimacy. Young people, therefore, have few role models with regard to relationships and little exposure to appropriate sexual behavior. When introduced to sexuality education, and concepts such as reserving sexual activity for a loving relationship later in life, young people can grasp these ideas intellectually, but often they do not have an experiential or real-life frame of reference.

Focusing on the Future

Adults who work with young people know that, as youth mature, they develop the cognitive ability to begin analyzing their feelings and developing their own sense of self. Youth then begin to understand what is in their best interest, not only for today but for the future. When young people receive guidance in setting and working toward goals that will ensure a bright future, they understand that an unintended pregnancy would prevent them from achieving those goals.

Obviously, this focus on the future is central to effective teen pregnancy prevention and should be at the core of all related activities. Even in specific sexual education programs, staff would be well advised to begin not with reproductive physiology, but by asking young people about their overall life plans. By asking, "Where do you think you are going to be in 5 or 10 years?" staff can begin to implant in youth the idea that they do indeed have a future. Discussions of how engaging in sexual activity can damage future opportunities then evolve naturally.

Chapter 2
The Abstinence Versus Education Debate

At the center of today's discussions about adolescent pregnancy prevention is a renewed analysis of the role of sexual education programs. The sexuality education construct is not new, having survived varying levels of support during the past two decades. For a range of reasons, these courses have varied dramatically in content, style, and focus. Some communities, for example, offer sexual education through the school-board-approved health curriculum. Others take a family planning approach, providing services through local health facilities or organizations such as Planned Parenthood.

Historically, it has been difficult in most areas to launch sexual education programming in schools or through other community institutions. Oddly, while sexual behavior is graphically displayed in motion pictures, magazines, and television, personal discussions of human sexuality create a range of reactions.

Much of this reaction comes from adults who grew up during times when human sexuality was rarely discussed. Discomfort with their own lack of information or education about sexual behavior may make them reluctant to encourage local health and education systems to provide such training to their children.

Moreover, within each community there are numerous institutions with varying positions on what constitutes appropriate sexual behavior. These include religious institutions, political parties, and even families.

As a result of these influences, educators interested in implementing sexuality education courses for youth often have had limited access to their intended audience. Consequently, advocates of sexuality education tended to move quickly to design and implement a curriculum or program whenever an opportunity for access to young people presented itself. As a result, most of the traditional sexual education programs focused on the more readily designed knowledge provision formats. Whether offered as components of existing school curriculums or as stand-alone programs, these units typically were didactic in format. They focused on the provision of factual health information, such as descriptions of reproductive systems, thereby avoiding the potentially value-laden discussions inherent in discussions of human sexuality.

Today, many social institutions offer information-based education. Young people, therefore, receive a great deal of information about reproductive choice, sexual behavior and the associated risks of pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). They learn that there are effective medical methods of birth control, some of which do not protect against STDs, including HIV/AIDS.

Yet, the debate over providing sexual education, and particularly contraceptive services, in schools or through any governmental organization continues. Some groups have characterized educating young people about their impending sexual development as encouraging them to engage in sexual behavior. Conversely, advocates of sexual education and family planning approaches point out that the few evaluations of abstinence education have not proven that it delays the age of first intercourse any better than do standard sexual education programs or nothing at all.

There is, however, common ground. The proponents of abstinence-based education, for example, suggest that youth should be taught that engaging in too-early sexual activity will delay their emotional or personal development and limit their opportunities to build a strong future. Most youth agency staff would agree. The youth development construct, which is gaining renewed interest across the country, suggests the very same tactic for preventing young people from involvement in a range of risky behaviors.

Moreover, most advocates of family planning would not suggest that contraceptive choice is the key feature of their efforts. Most people working with youth attempt to focus on the best interest of each young person. In the absence, however, of good information and support services to youth about the range of issues that currently put young people at risk, family planning advocates suggest that some youth are at risk of unintended pregnancies that could be prevented through the distribution of birth control.

Ironically, when schools or other social institutions introduce sexual education, the reactions are diverse. Some parents, uncomfortable discussing the subject because of their own upbringing, welcome intervention from the outside. Others react negatively, stating that sexuality is a private matter and should be discussed in the home. Yet, if provided the opportunity to visit the school or other program setting and learn what will be addressed through the sexual education curriculum, most parents welcome support in helping their children develop healthy relationships that are based on information, choice, respect, and responsibility. This process could be made easier if the entire community became involved in developing a consensus around what an acceptable sexual education program would

address and clarified roles for all community institutions in supporting that process of educating youth.

Moreover, the fragmented way in which governments often address social problems, treating unintended pregnancy, drug abuse, suicide, and violence as separate concerns needing separate solutions, has had strong implications for the sexual education field. Rather than incorporating sex education into an overall life passage curriculum, most communities have isolated the topic. Yet, too-early sexual involvement usually does not occur without relation to other developmental processes nor absent other behaviors, such as abusing drugs or alcohol or coming from a home in which young people witnessed violence as a form of gender control. Discussions of physical development, sexuality, pregnancy, and parenting responsibilities easily are integrated into curricula that focus on developing life skills and that touch on issues that might prevent youth from achieving their goals.

This approach is most likely to work, given that undesirable behaviors, including drug abuse and too-early sexual activity, generally are symptoms of underlying issues such as falling behind in school because of undiagnosed learning disabilities or being abused at home. All too often, youth who do not receive adequate support when they experience difficulty in some developmental area engage in behaviors with the potential to further damage their growth. For this reason, sexual education programming is far more effective when implemented within community-designed systems of supports and opportunities for young people.

Effective sexual education programs also...

- Are framed within a social learning or developmental model that enables young people to examine the risks of becoming sexually active within the context of planning for their future.

- Are designed by teams of academic researchers and professionals who work directly with young people and who have a background in adolescent development theory and a knowledge of adolescent cognitive development and capacity at different ages.

- Address gender roles that directly and indirectly affect sexual interaction, such as females being valued for their sexual attractiveness and males being valued for their sexual prowess (direct) and male and female perceptions about intimate relationships (indirect).

- Offer life skills training and value clarification sessions designed to help youth develop skills and a sense of responsibility.

- Present both the risks of involvement in sexual behaviors and specific actions young people can take to avoid those risks.

- Distribute information about contraception and the need to use it every time one engages in sexual activity, and state that the best contraceptive method is not to become sexually active.

- Dedicate sufficient time to both build trust and cover relevant issues through workshops, role-playing, and individual support. The issues addressed in sexual education programs are more complex and personal than those covered, for example, in a job preparation program.

- Focus not just on increasing knowledge but on improving skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively or to plan for the future.

- Help youth build relationship skills, especially with regard to expressing or protecting their own interests (girls) or taking responsibility for their partners (boys) since relationships are the context within which sexual activity occurs.

- Offer the sessions in places in which young people routinely participate, such as schools or clubs, so that youth will attend more than one session.

- Provide specialized support or immediate referral to such support for youth who, as a result of their participation in the education program, disclose sexual abuse.

- Are managed by highly trained, experienced staff.

Chapter 3
Pregnancy Prevention From the Youth Development Perspective

For more than 20 years, the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) has been at the forefront of supporting local communities in developing communitywide efforts to improve the lives of young people. During that time, the experience of FYSB and its local grantee programs has shown that implementing strategies that focus on preventing undesirable outcomes for youth, such as adolescent pregnancy, are less effective than creating a positive community vision for young people.

Many FYSB grantees, for example, have facilitated community discussions about what young people need to successfully make the transition to adulthood. They have used the definition of youth development designed by FYSB's predecessor agency, the Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention Administration (YDDPA), as their springboard for those discussions. The YDDPA's approach suggested that communities focus on offering youth the services and opportunities they need to acquire skills, define their place in the community, and take control over their futures. The YDDPA identified four critical elements that all young people need:

- A sense of competence
- A sense of usefulness
- A sense of belonging
- A sense of power

FYSB has built on the YDDPA framework by further examining adolescent development in the context of the broader social structure. Young people's development is influenced by both individual characteristics and environmental variables, and the interaction between the two. Key to determining how to most effectively support adolescents, therefore, is an understanding of young people's individual characteristics in the context of family, community, and societal influences.

Today, that youth development approach is integral to the design and operation of all of FYSB's programs, especially the Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth (TLP). FYSB's TLP was created through the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Amendments of 1988 passed by Congress as part of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690). Since 1990, local TLPs have offered young people without homes the services and opportunities they need to learn to live independently. Through the TLP, FYSB currently funds communities nationwide to provide residential services for up to 18 months (the maximum period allowed by legislative mandate) to older youth ages 16–21 who are homeless or unable to return home.

Most of the young people served by the TLPs have experienced difficult times and limited support at home *and* harsh experiences on the street prior to entering the programs. They arrive with few of the skills they will need to live on their own, away from the peer families they formed on the street. Yet, many of these young people quickly adapt to the supportive TLP environment. They readily begin taking advantage of opportunities to learn basic life skills, set goals, and participate in programs designed to enhance their academic performance or teach them new job skills. During

their stay at the TLPs, these youth also develop the attitudes and habits necessary to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency. The TLPs' success in helping young people move to independence is due in part to the incredible resiliency of youth, strong staff support, and the intensive reality-based learning environments the programs offer using a developmental framework.

TLPs: The Best Community Resource

During the past decade, FYSB and its TLPs have set new standards for serving young people through that developmental framework. The approach emphasizes providing youth with support in moving toward independence, holding them accountable for their actions within a compassionate context, and offering them opportunities to become contributing members of the larger community. The TLPs have found that as youth gain the opportunities, confidence, and skills to try new ventures or work toward dreams they had not thought attainable, they shift their decisionmaking framework from the short term to the long term. As their thinking becomes future oriented, youth naturally begin making short-range choices that preserve their dreams and goals. Among those are decisions that prevent unintended pregnancies.

Today, there are more young people than ever growing up in circumstances that put them at risk of involvement in potentially harmful behaviors, that offer them few opportunities, and that make them feel hopeless about the future. These youth need the support of caring adults who can equip them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need not just to survive, but to thrive.

FYSB's TLP offers communities a positive option for helping these youth. The program also offers lessons on supporting all young people in learning how to make appropriate life choices. Those choices are critical to efforts to reduce adolescent pregnancy, a phenomenon that unquestionably will lead to greater rates of child abuse and neglect and increasing intergenerational poverty and hopelessness. Moreover, the TLP offers State agencies administering the new Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program an existing adult-supervised placement option for young pregnant or parenting girls.

There is growing awareness that dealing with public health issues such as adolescent pregnancy or drug abuse requires a comprehensive approach that begins at the community level. Lasting positive change will come only when communities begin to create a vision for all of their youngest members that includes strategies for reducing barriers to their success, access to information and opportunities, and most important, hope for the future.

FYSB's TLP offers communities a model for making that vision a reality. Communities interested in reducing adolescent pregnancies, as well as the host of other adolescent behaviors resulting from childhoods characterized by poverty, abuse, or neglect, can draw on the TLP experience to offer young people the range of supports and opportunities they need and deserve.

The TLP Approach

The TLPs provide young people a dynamic learning environment that includes both classroom-based activi-

ties and practical experiences. Most TLPs use a phase system under which young people gradually move from a highly structured environment to one in which they are expected to live more independently. Throughout this time, TLP staff monitor their progress and provide support. This phase system gives TLP youth increasing autonomy as they put new skills into practice.

Upon entering the program, TLP participants might, for example, live with other youth in a group home that is supervised by project staff. As youth demonstrate increased decisionmaking skills, responsibility, and goal orientation, they move into apartments owned or supervised by the agency. Finally, they move into individual scattered-site apartments, which are apartments rented directly by a young person with the sponsorship of the TLP.

In all three settings, young people assume increasing responsibility for household management functions as they progress through the program. These include cooking, cleaning, repair and maintenance, and household budgeting. In addition, in most TLP residential settings, youth also live with at least one other young person. Sharing a room or an apartment requires youth to develop an understanding of the differences between people and to learn and exercise a range of relationship skills. Staff are available to provide advice and support, while young people retain responsibility for implementing agreed-upon courses of action.

Creating a Sense of the Future

Helping youth establish clear goals, and strategies for achieving those goals, is key to the FYSB TLPs' success

in preparing young people for self-sufficiency. That process begins at intake, a time when staff meet with youth individually to help them set goals for their period of residence in the TLP and for the future.

While the next steps may vary from program to program, most TLPs then help youth incorporate those goals into service plans that are monitored closely by staff, often through a case management approach. Those service plans provide road maps for young people's involvement in TLP activities and services. Together, youth and TLP staff are able to identify young people's strengths and areas in which they will need support, and then develop short- and long-term goals. Agency staff then help youth gain access to services and opportunities through agency programming or the TLPs' strong referral networks of community agencies and institutions.

Staff meet regularly with youth individually to help them assess their progress, to identify areas of difficulty and devise strategies for addressing them, and to celebrate their accomplishments. These weekly or monthly progress meetings also offer youth the chance to discuss evolving interests and how they might best pursue them.

While young people's individual service plans vary, all youth in TLPs are required to participate in academic and/or work activities. Most TLP youth are pursuing a high school diploma or equivalency in preparation for entering college or the work force. To that end, the TLPs have developed strong service linkages with local high schools and other institutions that give youth access to high-quality educational or vocational training opportunities. TLP staff are available to assist youth in staying on track with their coursework and to help

them develop or refine study skills and habits. TLPs also maintain service linkages that can assist them with special needs, such as with community programs that specialize in providing academic instruction for youth with developmental disabilities.

Typically, TLPs also require young people to work at least part-time while in the program. The agencies first assist youth in learning the behaviors and attitudes that they need to succeed in a work setting. These include good appearance and grooming, promptness, listening skills, and the ability to take direction. TLP staff also support young people throughout their work experiences by serving as sources of coaching and advice, and by acting as liaisons to employers, as necessary. In fact, employers often prefer to hire TLP participants since they know that staff will be responsive should issues arise regarding young people's performance.

Support for young people's academic or work accomplishments, or attainment of other goals, is sustained in part through the ongoing life skills training offered by all FYSB TLPs. These classroom- or group-discussion-based sessions complement the practical experiences that young people obtain through other TLP services. Young people generally meet once or twice a week in a forum that enables them to learn critical life skills from staff, outside experts, and each other. Most life skills curricula generally cover the following:

- Basic life skills, such as budgeting, using credit, housekeeping, menu planning and food preparation, and consumer education
- Interpersonal skill building, including establishing positive relationships with peers and adults, making decisions, and managing stress

- Job preparation and attainment, including career counseling, job-seeking skills, development of appropriate workplace behaviors, and guidance on dress and grooming

The combination of life skills training and immediate opportunities to use those new skills helps youth develop discipline, which will serve them well long after they leave the program. Young people generally are required, for example, to establish a personal budget and set aside a specific amount from each paycheck as savings. In most cases, the youth also pay partial rent throughout their TLP stay; the agencies place the money into a savings account and the funds become available to youth participants upon graduation.

During the final stages of youth involvement in TLPs, agencies continue to provide supervision and support. Increasingly, the FYSB TLPs are providing longer term aftercare as well. Whether or not the process is formalized, most TLP staff report that young people return to the agency when they run into difficulties; for many, the TLP staff are the closest thing to family that they know. Other youth participants also form a support network for youth as they move on to independent living. Many agencies use the same apartment complexes to place youth; former graduates who continue to live there help the new young people adapt to their surroundings.

The TLP Approach to Preventing Adolescent Pregnancies

The TLP approach to serving young people is holistic, addressing the full range of needs and concerns experi-

enced by all adolescents and the problems experienced by youth from at-risk circumstances. More important, the TLP programs are based on the notion that all young people have value and potential. The TLPs support young people in identifying and building on their strengths and creating a sense of the future for those who otherwise might lose hope.

Because of this holistic adolescent development approach, the FYSB TLPs serve as one of the best models of adolescent pregnancy prevention. Many TLP agencies also integrate targeted adolescent pregnancy prevention activities into their core TLP programming. Moreover, a number of FYSB TLP programs began focusing on the need to provide services to adolescent parents, and to prevent unintended second adolescent pregnancies, as far back as 1990. They subsequently adapted the TLP model to enable them to serve adolescent mothers, a population that require different types of supports and services than do youth without children.

Promise House (Dallas, Texas), for example, which provides services to pregnant adolescents and other homeless young people through its Shelter and Lifestyles Transitional Living Program, recently explored options for expanding its programming for homeless parenting adolescents. Through a community assessment, Promise House learned that there were no group homes for this population in Dallas.

Beginning in 1993, Promise House carried out two pilot projects that placed young women and their children in subsidized apartments and/or public housing. Case management services to these families were provided by the Shelter and Lifestyles TLP. As a result of the projects, Promise House convinced the community

of the value of investing in parenting adolescents, both to support them and their children and to prevent future pregnancies. In June 1997, Promise House opened the first long-term shelter and transitional living program for adolescent parents in North Central Texas, with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and matching funding from the United Methodist Men of North Central Texas.

The following sections highlight how the FYSB TLPs operate specialized adolescent pregnancy prevention and parenting services within a youth development framework that supports young people in achieving a sense of competence, a sense of usefulness, a sense of belonging, and a sense of power, all key ingredients in preventing adolescent pregnancy.

A Sense of Competence

Young people learn to feel competent through academic and workplace achievement, as well as by setting and meeting goals, key components of all FYSB TLPs. The TLPs promote a sense of competence through their phased living systems, academic and employment training, and reality-based exercises that help youth understand those areas in which they still need to develop.

For years, the FYSB TLPs have offered job-readiness training and employment placement services. Today, some TLPs have expanded those efforts to include entrepreneurial projects through which youth develop both employment and management skills by starting businesses of their own. Using funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

(HUD), the El Paso Center for Children (El Paso, Texas), for example, recently launched a hydroponic greenhouse project that will be operated by the adolescent mothers served by the agency's FYSB-funded TLP. The young mothers, with staff supervision, will raise specialized vegetables that the center plans to sell to local businesses and restaurants. The agency and the adolescent mothers will share in the profits. Through the greenhouse business, the youth participants will learn technical, production, marketing, and customer relations skills. Even if participants do not stay in the greenhouse business, they will retain skills, plus attitudes and values regarding work, that are important in any position.

Young people also develop competence through reality-based training that helps them understand what they know, what they are able to handle at this stage in their lives, and what areas they need to learn more about. FYSB's TLP program staff have long known that young people learn best when instruction is combined with practical experience. The TLPs, therefore, use a variety of service models, projects, and activities to provide nonparenting TLP participants a realistic picture of adolescent parenthood.

Many of the TLPs, for example, intentionally house nonparenting and parenting youth in the same facilities. These living arrangements not only avoid stigmatizing parenting youth by separating them from other young people, but give nonparenting youth the opportunity to experience, firsthand, the realities of caring for infants and children.

Similarly, the Youth Shelters and Family Services TLP, Casa Libertad (Santa Fe, New Mexico), offers nonparenting youth a sense of what parenting means by facili-

tating group discussions about adolescent parenting that are led by young mothers as part of the program's life skills trainings. Through this arrangement, the adolescent mothers develop group facilitation and training skills, in keeping with the agency's desire to draw on the strengths and expertise of program-involved youth. At the same time, the nonparenting youth are exposed to the real-life issues faced by their parenting counterparts.

Finally, nonparenting young people in the Youth and Shelter Services (YSS), Inc., TLP (Ames, Iowa) participate in the Baby Think It Over pregnancy prevention program. Through the program, youth carry a lifelike baby doll for at least 24 hours. The doll is programmed to cry at various intervals, requiring attention from the adolescent caregiver. Young people learn the skills and endurance necessary to care for an infant; the result often is a shift in attitude about their own readiness for parenthood.

As young people begin to develop new competencies, and to draw on their existing talents and skills, they start to develop a sense of purpose within the TLP and the broader community. They begin to understand their own value and to participate in program and community activities through which they can enhance their sense of usefulness.

A Sense of Usefulness

Involving young people in the community creates situations in which youth are contributing to the greater good. Through those experiences, they gain a sense of usefulness and learn new skills or information that can

positively shape their future. The TLPs start with the simple premise that being a good community member begins with being a good neighbor. Prior to entering the TLP, many youth did not have an adult role model setting an example of the "responsible neighbor." TLP staff, therefore, require participants to get to know their neighbors, contribute to community activities such as neighborhood cleanups, respect neighbors' privacy, and adhere to neighborhood norms regarding issues such as noise and property upkeep.

Many of the TLPs also help participants become active, contributing community members by encouraging or requiring them to participate in community service activities. In some instances, those volunteer opportunities also provide young people with experiences that reinforce the messages being learned through the TLP. The Three Rivers Youth Transitional Living Program (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), for example, involves 16–21-year-old homeless females in activities such as the March of Dimes walks to raise funds to prevent birth defects or the Pittsburgh AIDS walks that promote safe sex. At the Centre County Youth Service Bureau Stepping Stone Transitional Living Program (State College, Pennsylvania), when young women express an interest in having a baby, the agency involves them in community service at a local day care center. Stepping Stone staff report that through that experience, youth learn firsthand what it takes to care for infants and children.

More important, through their involvement in these and other community activities, young people learn about how contributing to the greater good enables them to confirm their place in society. They develop an understanding of how reaching out to others results in new relationships and a stronger sense of belonging.

A Sense of Belonging

Every young person is trying to find their place in the world. Often the TLPs are the first place in which they can feel comfortable and safe, and establish relationships with trusted adults. The TLPs provide youth with a homelike atmosphere in which they can form strong relationship networks that they can rely upon following their period of TLP residence.

The El Paso Center for Children, for example, arranged for the local TANF agency to provide one caseworker for all the young mothers participating in the TLP. The caseworker now visits the TLP when a new youth is admitted. That linkage reduces the need for staff to transport participants to client support offices located in various parts of El Paso. Through this arrangement, the caseworker also develops an understanding of TLP goals, particularly as they support the new TANF system.

The TLPs also have strong peer and adult mentoring programs that allow participants to form relationships with other young people who can serve as role models and with adults who can offer support and guidance. The Centre County Youth Service Bureau's Baby Connections Program, for example, pairs community volunteers with pregnant or parenting adolescents. The volunteers, who have children of their own, help the adolescents understand the process of doctor visits and the importance of good nutrition. They also provide general support during the young person's pregnancy. Typically the volunteers continue their support through the first year of the baby's life.

In addition, many TLPs allow youth to remain in their scattered-site apartments upon graduating. Our Town Family Center's TLP (Tucson, Arizona), which serves parenting and nonparenting youth, has maintained scattered-site apartments in many of the same complexes through the years. Present and former TLP participants, therefore, are able to live in the same complexes, which provides both groups a sense of continuity. That arrangement also allows TLP staff to maintain contact with former TLP participants since they regularly visit current participants.

Further, some TLPs provide venues for young men and women to share their perspectives on a range of issues with one another. Such discussions can help establish communication among participants, thereby enhancing young people's sense of comfort in the group, program, and larger community. The Valley Youth House TLP (Allentown, Pennsylvania), for example, holds weekly meetings that allow youth participants to discuss a range of issues related to the program. Staff sometimes use these forums to discuss the dynamics of communication between and among the genders regarding sexuality issues, including maintaining healthy relationships, identifying and responding to sexual harassment, and working effectively with supervisors of the opposite sex. Young people, including those who are pregnant and parenting, also are able to discuss what it feels like to be the target of unwanted sexual advances, or talk about the social pressure they feel to make sexual choices that do not fit in with their goals for themselves.

Those goals begin to appear attainable as youth move through the TLP process, developing a sense of competence, usefulness, and belonging. All of these factors

foster a growing feeling among youth that they can and will achieve their goals for the future.

A Sense of Power

At the core of anyone's sense of power is the feeling of having control over one's fate and having opportunities to contribute to decisions about one's life. Helping young people achieve that control and decisionmaking authority in a safe environment is central to the TLP philosophy. The TLPs typically offer young people chances to plan their own futures *and* to participate in enhancing program operations that will improve conditions for other participants and the broader community. Through those opportunities, young people tap unexplored talents and learn about the responsibilities and pressures that accompany leadership.

Right from the start, the TLPs introduce the notion of planning for the future and taking responsibility for one's life. Through the intake assessment and planning process, TLP staff help youth focus on their future, including deciding on a pregnancy prevention plan. For many young people, this is the first chance they have had to consider their own sexual development within the context of their plans for the future.

In helping youth develop pregnancy prevention plans, staff provide an open atmosphere in which youth can ask questions and share their experiences about sexual activity. They also can examine whether they wish to continue current sexual behaviors. This approach to goal setting means that staff do not, for example, automatically assume that young people who are sexually active will choose to continue that pattern. Rather, staff

assist these youth in analyzing how remaining sexually active might affect their future.

Since information is power, most TLPs integrate sexual education activities throughout TLP services in a range of forms. These include lectures, role-plays, and small-group discussions, many of which are facilitated by peer trainers or outside speakers. The Residential Youth Services TLP, the LIFT Project (Alexandria, Virginia), which serves parenting and nonparenting youth, uses a yearlong curriculum to offer educational workshops to TLP participants on a range of life skill issues, including parenting skills. Speakers from other agencies, such as Planned Parenthood and the local health department, are invited to discuss topics such as family planning and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, speakers from a local alcohol and drug services agency and the local Community Services Board speak with young people about substance abuse and its effect on decisionmaking abilities.

The focus of these activities typically is to help adolescents understand their sexual development as it relates to their overall development. With that knowledge as a foundation, staff then can discuss the implications of a range of options regarding sexual expression on young people's development in the physical, social, psychological, and emotional areas. Staff also guide youth through practical exercises that help them develop the refusal, assertiveness, and negotiation skills they will need to manage situations that could put them at risk of future pregnancy.

Many TLPs incorporate youth leadership roles into the TLP residential programming. Staff of Arbor House, a TLP for pregnant and parenting girls operated by Friends of Youth (Bothell, Washington), for example,

select a resident each month, on the basis of seniority and performance, to serve as residential advisor. In that role, youth act as a liaison between residents and staff, plan and facilitate monthly house meetings, coordinate a recreational outing, and assist the staff in other tasks as needed.

The LIFT Project involves young people in decision-making in several ways. One participant serves as the youth representative and participates in staff meetings, program development discussions, and interviews of prospective staff. The LIFT Project also encourages routine input from youth about how program rules and operation affect them. The youth meet alone monthly to discuss issues that warrant staff attention. If the youth question a rule or program structure, they are given the opportunity to develop an alternative solution. In fact, input from young people was key to the agency's decision to move the TLP to a more culturally diverse neighborhood.

By involving youth in real leadership experiences, the TLPs reinforce young people's need to continue to grow in other areas, including developing skills and a sense of competence, building a sense of usefulness by taking advantage of academic or employment opportunities, and strengthening their relationships with others to enhance their sense of belonging. Growth in each of those areas is critical to their ability to make decisions, accept responsibility for those decisions, and become thoughtful, contributing, and contented members of society.

More important, the TLP youth development approach works for all young people. These include youth from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds; youth who were abused, neglected, or exploited; and youth who find

themselves taking on the responsibilities of parenting at an early age. As an effective method for helping young people from a range of backgrounds and situations, the TLP youth development approach has become the logical choice for communities interested in addressing the range of risky behaviors in which youth can become involved, including delinquent behavior, drug use, or too-early pregnancy.

Preventing Pregnancy: The Lessons Learned

During the past two decades, researchers and advocates for young people have explored "what works" in pregnancy prevention. More recently, the FYSB TLPs across the country began filling a community need: providing supportive housing to young pregnant and parenting adolescents and developing pregnancy prevention strategies for youth from the most troubled circumstances. Through those experiences, local TLPs have implemented a youth development approach that works and identified the following key variables in preventing adolescent pregnancy:

- Providing young people a safe environment in which to explore their inevitable sexual maturation
- Removing obstacles to young people's access to pregnancy prevention and family planning information and services
- Providing aftercare support as youth transition back into the community and independent living
- Educating all young people about how to prevent adolescent pregnancy

Offering Young People a Sense of Safety

During adolescence, young people need environments that allow them to explore new interests, develop skills, and make mistakes. Several program characteristics allow the TLPs to offer youth a safe, stable setting in which they can, often for the first time, learn critical life skills, receive advice and encouragement, put new learnings into practice, and address damaging experiences such as abuse and neglect.

First, the TLPs adhere to FYSB's strict confidentiality guidelines. These prevent information on young people from being shared outside of the agency without the consent of the young person and their parent or legal guardian, except in extremely rare cases. For youth who have been on the street in situations in which they were exposed to crime, violence, and sexual exploitation, confidentiality is critical to their willingness to discuss past experiences that affect their current health and well-being.

Second, TLP staff are trained to respect young people's boundaries and to stay within the limits of the professional relationship. Most agencies have strict rules that govern staff interaction with youth regarding physical and emotional boundaries. These are designed to ensure that youth feel safe enough to begin dealing with prior abuse or exploitation.

Third, staff create an atmosphere of open inquiry in which young people feel free to approach them with concerns or questions regarding sensitive topics. In that environment, young people are more willing to talk about issues critical to their well-being, particularly those related to sexuality.

Finally, staff are available to young people 24 hours a day to respond to problems or emergencies. Having immediate access to staff helps ease the natural anxieties of youth who have experienced months or years of neglect or victimization at home or on the street. This access to caring adults is the first step in removing barriers to providing youth with pregnancy prevention information and services. Most TLPs have implemented other strategies for minimizing the obstacles youth often face in seeking guidance on sexuality issues.

Removing Obstacles to Pregnancy Prevention Information and Services

The TLPs seek to remove physical or psychological barriers that could discourage TLP participants from seeking the information or services necessary to prevent unintended pregnancies. Seeking such help requires a certain level of individual motivation. This can easily dissipate when youth run into barriers, such as clinics that are open only during school hours or lack of transportation to clinics located in difficult-to-reach areas.

Many of the FYSB TLPs have worked to reduce the barriers that might prevent young people from making healthy sexual choices. The Three Rivers Youth TLP, for example, has set up a collaboration with Children's Hospital and Alma Illery Medical Center to offer TLP participants physicals, individualized consultation and education on pregnancy prevention, and access to contraceptives.

The New Roads TLP, operated by Looking Glass Youth and Family Services (Eugene, Oregon), went a step fur-

ther and brought health services on site. A nurse visits the TLP facility three times a week to provide free medical care and pregnancy testing. She also talks with young women about preventing unintended pregnancies. Having a medical professional on site provides young people with an additional source of advice and information. Such access can be critical for youth who feel more at ease discussing pregnancy prevention issues with a medical professional.

Conversely, other TLPs take young people to services. Within the first 90 days after young people enter the New Beginnings TLP (Lewiston, Maine), for example, the TLP's Prevention Educator takes them to the local family planning clinic, which houses an STD and HIV testing facility. Participants meet the clinic's Teen Health Coordinator and tour the facility so that they will feel more comfortable about requesting services should the need arise in the future.

Further, some TLPs provide youth access to condoms in public places throughout TLP facilities so that youth are not required to request them from staff. That practice provides youth with some element of privacy. It also reinforces the message to young people who choose to remain sexually active that condom use is essential in protecting their health and preventing pregnancy.

Equally important is the atmosphere of trust that exists within the TLPs, which allows youth to feel free to share both their successes and their difficulties related to sexuality issues. That environment encourages TLP participants to draw on staff as resources in answering questions and helping them think through sexual choices. It is because of the trust relationships they have established with staff that youth are able to return for help long after they leave the programs.

Aftercare Programs That Encourage Pregnancy Prevention

The TLPs are highly effective in helping youth avoid pregnancy and parenting during their stays in the program. Youth, however, may return to situations after graduating that do not provide positive reinforcement for their healthy decisions regarding sexual activity or reproductive choices. For that reason, the TLPs invest resources into supporting young people as they are mainstreamed back into the community.

The component of the Lighthouse Youth Services TLP (Cincinnati, Ohio) that serves parenting young women, for example, is beginning an innovative incentive program that encourages TLP graduates to maintain skills they learned in the TLP and to remain in contact with the program. Through that initiative, the TLP will deposit money into an account each time a graduate returns to attend a life skills session during the first 12–18 months after graduating. If the young woman does not become pregnant during the 12–18-month period, she then will have access to the accumulated funds.

The TLPs identified the need to expand support to young graduates, especially those at high risk of pregnancy. At the same time, they also identified a role they could play in helping all community youth have access to life-skills-focused pregnancy prevention services.

Taking TLP Pregnancy Prevention and Parenting Services on the Road

Some of the local youth service agencies that operate TLPs are bringing the pregnancy prevention approaches offered through their programs to young people in their communities. Many collaborate with community institutions to offer these services through central locations such as schools or to encourage referrals to agency pregnancy prevention and parenting programs.

Teen Connection (New Braunfels, Texas), for example, which operates a TLP, offers life skills training, pregnancy prevention and parenting courses, and counseling to local high school students who are young parents. Through the curriculum, Teen Connection conducts individual independent living skills assessments, offers family planning information, and provides skill-building information and activities in areas such as relationships, conflict resolution, self-esteem, and parenting.

Three Rivers Youth operates a Pregnant and Parenting Youth Program, which supports young people who have decided to parent their children. The program seeks to help youth care appropriately for their children and prevent second unintended pregnancies by offering educational courses, on such topics as nutrition, child development, and effective pregnancy prevention, to young people who live at home.

Youth in Need (St. Louis, Missouri), which operates a TLP, has developed Teen Parent Support Groups open to pregnant and parenting adolescents in St. Charles County. The groups meet weekly at public high schools, and participants are provided information on

prenatal care, pregnancy, childbirth, and legal issues. The primary goal of the groups is to provide youth with a supportive environment in which to discuss issues of importance to them. Most referrals to these groups come from high school personnel, such as nurses and school counselors.

Some TLPs are targeting older youth, which is important given recent research that suggests many underage girls are impregnated by young adult males. The Young Adult Guidance Center (YAGC), Inc., In Tune to Life Skills Training Program (Atlanta, Georgia), for example, has developed a collaboration with Emory University, Clark Atlanta University, and Morris Brown College to offer pregnancy prevention workshops during the early evening hours to older youth who are from the community or participate in YAGC services. Through the workshops, YAGC staff collaborate with university faculty and students to address topics such as the responsibilities of parenting, HIV and STD prevention, male and female methods of contraception, the maturation process, and abstinence.

These and other outreach efforts by the FYSB TLPs ensure that youth in many communities increasingly receive adult guidance and support as they make the transition to adulthood. Moreover, through that outreach, the TLPs have developed relationships through which they are helping communities create a youth development approach for providing opportunities and services to all young people.

Chapter 4
Ideas for Getting Started

Focusing simply on young people is not the answer to any of this Nation's problems, including unintended adolescent pregnancy. The solutions lie in involving communities in tackling the challenge of developing comprehensive strategies that include the following:

- A process for helping the community explore and then develop a consensus about issues of sexuality, including the messages it wants to convey about those issues, and how best to share them with young people.
- A youth development approach supports young people in planning for the future and avoiding risky behaviors. It comprises services, access to opportunities, and strong adult support.
- Education for parents that will help increase their comfort in dealing with issues of sexuality, provide information about adolescent development, and offer them guidance in supporting their children during adolescent sexual maturation.

Developing a comprehensive approach to addressing any community problem is never easy. The difficulties inherent in building partnerships and consensus are the key stumbling blocks for any broad-based collaborative effort.

Yet, the timing may be right to begin such an effort now. Interested individuals and organizations can leverage concern about adolescent pregnancy and society's wish to reduce dependence on social services to build

new partnerships for helping young people. The following ideas can help communities begin to build the collaborative relationships necessary to design a comprehensive framework, not only for preventing teen pregnancy, but for supporting all young people in setting and achieving their goals, reaching their full potential, and becoming active, contributing members of the community.

Taking Action: Promoting a Youth Development Approach to Pregnancy Prevention

While communities must assess local needs, resource availability, and attitudes, they can use the ideas below to begin launching a communitywide effort not only to address adolescent pregnancy but to identify comprehensive strategies for supporting all young people.

Strategies for Community Leaders

- Assess what the community has and needs to respond effectively to young people.

- Help educate the larger community about the need to realistically discuss adolescent sexuality in terms of the human development process and to develop systems through which sexuality issues critical to young people's progress toward adulthood can be addressed within a framework that is respectful of parents' and other community members' concerns.

- Consider hosting a study circle that brings community members together to plan new methods for addressing adolescent pregnancy prevention.

- Work with community leaders to develop strategies for helping youth understand that their sexual feelings are a normal part of healthy development.

- Work with the local youth service agency to establish a process for building community consensus on implementing a youth development approach to supporting young people, particularly those in at-risk circumstances.

- Encourage the development of interagency collaborations through which young people can receive a range of services through one central location.

- Arrange for youth service agencies to provide family service providers and health care practitioners with training about the adolescent development process and to assist them in reframing services so that they are accessible and comfortable to young people.

- Assist youth agencies in developing collaborative relationships with local hospitals that can provide youth with health exams, individual consultation, and education about pregnancy prevention.

- Ask local health clinics or family planning service providers to provide tours to youth participating in youth service agency programs. Through the tours, youth agencies can help reduce young people's concerns or fears about accessing such services when they need them by introducing youth to a contact person at the clinic or family planning agency and enabling them to ask questions in a general rather than a personal fashion.

- Build community awareness by creating a program through which older parents serve as volunteer mentors for young people during their pregnancy and the year following the babies' births.

- Start a speaker's bureau of adolescent mothers who can talk about their experiences to other young people or potential funding sources.

- Provide parent groups for adolescent parents. Such groups can offer a supportive environment in which youth can discuss the challenges they face.

- Involve youth in charitable events through which they also can learn information useful to them, such as local March of Dimes walks to raise funds to prevent birth defects or AIDS walks to promote safe sex.

Strategies for Youth Program Personnel

- Help young people think ahead by getting them to explore how becoming close to a person of the opposite gender will require some examination of their expectations of each other, including expectations regarding sexual activity. Through these discussions, staff can assist youth in understanding that people who really care about them will place their long-term best interests ahead of their own short-term desires.

- Provide young people opportunities to role-play their communication skills with the opposite sex. Through that process, they can learn how to explain their reasons for not choosing to engage in sexual activity or to discuss the use of contraceptives and condoms.

- Ask enough questions at intake to determine whether youth need or want assistance in dealing with sexuality, contraceptive, or family planning issues, and then include strategies for addressing those issues in the overall plan for the future.

- Design a short needs assessment that will help determine what each young person might need to deal with their sexual maturation. This might include a few questions about their sexual knowledge, their sexual experiences, and the types of support they would like in dealing with their sexual development.

- Provide youth the opportunity to experience the responsibilities of parenthood, through pro-

grams such as Baby Think it Over, described on page 34.

- Offer opportunities for parents of youth involved in the program to discuss how the agency's sexuality education strategies affect their parenting. Invite parents to help develop such programming, both for young people and for parents.

- Offer youth opportunities to watch educational videos on sexuality issues.

- Offer parenting training and ongoing pregnancy prevention to adolescent parents in conjunction with housing programs or the local educational system.

- Help young parents deal with real-life issues such as how to find day care.

- Offer home visits to new adolescent parents to help them get started, including health checks for the babies and information for the new parents.

- Invite speakers from Planned Parenthood and other family planning or parenting organizations to provide educational sessions for young people.

- Organize youth-led groups or train peer counselors to facilitate discussions of sexuality issues.

- Consider implementing a "risk reduction" curriculum that teaches young people strategies for identifying risks, avoiding risky situations, escaping risky situations, and managing risk. These

lessons can be applied to avoiding unwanted sexual encounters or preventing HIV/AIDS and unintended pregnancies.

- Hang informational posters, including those that stress being a responsible partner and those that provide referrals for key services, throughout the program facility.

- Make sure that young people have access to other adults, such as local health care providers who stop by the program weekly. These adults offer youth a greater sense of anonymity as they struggle with complex personal issues, such as their sexual maturation.

- Include discussions of gender differences in all sexual education programming. Help adolescent girls learn to make appropriate choices for their future and to strengthen their sense of personal power. Help adolescent boys explore issues of cultural sexism and their role in society, particularly as it relates to being a responsible partner.

- Integrate services for parenting and nonparenting youth. Watching an adolescent mother struggle with a stroller on the bus is a better deterrent to adolescent pregnancy than all the lectures in the world.

- Offer access to academic preparation and job readiness and employment training to help young people focus on their futures.

- Consider entrepreneurial projects through which young people gain valuable work experience and the organization builds its resource base.

- Provide incentives for young people who graduate from a youth program to stay involved in pregnancy prevention and parenting services.

- Support young mothers through special outings, both with their children and without. Use the outings to continue broadening young women's exposure to new activities and to help them learn how to have fun with their children.

- Create home visiting programs for young mothers, through which nurses and other health service providers offer training on parenting, nutrition, and child development.

- Establish adolescent sexuality education or pregnancy prevention programs that are long enough in duration to enable staff to establish the trust necessary to discuss highly sensitive issues with young people.

- Train staff how to ask questions in a manner that conveys interest but is not invasive.

- Help the larger community understand that, if you asked young people where they wanted to be 5 years from now, none of them would say "Pregnant, with a 3-year-old, sleeping in a doorway."

Chapter 5
Building on Lessons Learned

There has been a backlash in the 1990s that resulted from frustration with failed social policies. More than two decades ago, Americans put their trust in social and health scientists who suggested that they might be able to cure the problem of the moment, be it drug abuse, child abuse, or adolescent pregnancy. Researchers and program personnel alike suggested to community leaders that, if given access to the population experiencing difficulties, they could provide answers. In many cases, they promised far more than they have delivered.

In fairness, most social service providers leapt to offer quick solutions to problems because that is what most communities demanded. Few jurisdictions were willing or able to dedicate the long-term resources necessary to fully address complex issues such as addiction or family violence. Even fewer were willing to take risks in regard to intervening with families.

More than 20 years later, the trust is gone. In some ways, social scientists underestimated the complexity of the problems facing individuals, families, and communities. In other ways, communities simply expected too much from a small group of professionals, when real solutions only can evolve with the strong support and involvement of the entire community.

Those experiences, however, have produced valuable lessons, which can enable the Nation to move ahead with its plan to protect and support all its citizens, especially the less fortunate. Those experiences, in fact, form the guiding principles of the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services (DHHS) Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention National Strategy.

We have learned that. . .

- While research should play an important role in defining key and effective elements of social programming, researchers must work with practitioners and policymakers in designing and implementing program strategies.
- Parents and other adult community members must be actively involved in developing solutions to neighborhood problems. More important, they must be involved with young people, serving as mentors and teachers.
- Teaching young people to say "no" to drugs, to violence, or to too-early involvement in sexual activity is important. But stressing abstinence in any area is only an effective strategy if teamed with information, support, education, and access to opportunity.
- Young people need hope for the future, adults to help them set positive goals, and connections to opportunities through which to accomplish those goals.

Perhaps most important, communities need to make a sustained commitment to young people and include them in developing the parameters of that commitment. This requires more than offering the "program du jour" according to legislated areas of current interest. Commitment is, by definition, dedication to a long-term course of action.

In the past, national youth policy too frequently has shifted according to the prevailing political winds. Just as new social programs were up and running, someone pulled the financial plug. With little access to long-term funding for programming, most communities have tried to adapt available resources to meet the needs of youth and families.

These shifts in funding streams, both nationally and locally, have made it difficult for local programs to concentrate their efforts on developing a comprehensive approach to helping all young people. Despite these challenges, many local youth agencies have worked collaboratively to begin making the systemic changes necessary to ensure that all young people can work toward a brighter future.

The Family and Youth Services Bureau's (FYSB's) youth development approach offers communities a method for doing exactly that. Through the youth development approach, communities can focus on strengthening relationships between children and parents and between families and communities. More important, the youth development approach offers strategies for reengaging youth and families in rebuilding communities.

Unintended adolescent pregnancy merely is a symptom of the far more serious problems facing this Nation: intergenerational poverty, deteriorating communities, and the resulting disenfranchisement of the new generation. Sexual education will help prevent some unintended pregnancies and counseling will stop others. The problem of children having children, however, will not end until we give young people the information, services, and opportunities necessary for them to work toward positive, healthy futures. FYSB's youth develop-

ment approach is one way to ensure that all young people will receive the support and guidance necessary to learn how to take advantage of opportunities, to gain access to services, to make appropriate choices, and to build a future.

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[1]*Please note that inclusion of a publication on this list does not imply endorsement by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), or the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth (NCFY). Moreover, points of view and opinions expressed in these publications do not necessarily represent the official position, policies, or views of FYSB, the DHHS, or NCFY.*

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National Resource Organizations on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention[1]

Advocates for Youth
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FAX: (202) 347-2263

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FAX: (212) 248-1951

American Reproductive Health Professionals
2401 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Suite 350
Washington, D.C. 20037-1718
(202) 466-3825
FAX: (202) 466-3826

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National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
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(202) 857-8655
FAX: (202) 331-7735

National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting
1319 F Street, N.W.
Suite 401
Washington, D.C. 20004
(202) 783-5770
FAX: (202) 783-5775

Office of Population Affairs Clearinghouse
P.O. Box 30686
Bethesda, MD 20824-0686
(301) 654-6190
FAX: (301) 215-7731

Planned Parenthood Federation of America
810 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10019
(212) 541-7800
FAX: (212) 245-1845

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States
130 West 42nd Street
Suite 350
New York, NY 10036
(212) 819-9770
FAX: (212) 819-9776

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- *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth*
- *Supporting Your Adolescent: Tips for Parents*

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